

PROCEEDINGS
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A NEW RACE OF NIGHTHAWK FROM THE
UPPER MAGDALENA VALLEY OF COLOMBIA

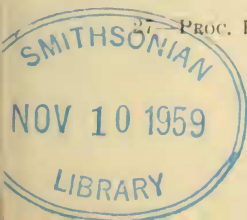
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Previous studies of the birds of the upper Magdalena Valley of Colombia (Miller, *Auk*, 64: 351-381, 1947; *ibid.*, 60: 450-457, 1952) have shown that this semi-arid basin is the center of several racial differentiates some of which show pale coloration in one form or another (Miller, *Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash.*, 65: 13-17, 1952). The nighthawks of the species *Chordeiles acutipennis* of this area have been restudied following the assemblage of comparative material that is more adequate than that previously available. This has revealed that there is a pale differentiate of this species also which breeds in the Magdalena basin.

The manifestation of reduced pigmentation in the Magdalena sample of *Chordeiles acutipennis* is almost entirely in the ventral plumage unlike the situation in the races *C. a. aequatorialis* and *C. a. exilis* in the arid belts of Ecuador and Perú, which are pale dorsally. The pallor is variably expressed in the six available specimens of the Magdalena population. It is most consistent in the under tail coverts by reason of the greatly reduced barring of this area, but it also is evident in the reduced width of the dark bars and stripes of the belly and breast. The light ground color of the underparts becomes very pale, particularly on the breast, in certain individuals, notably in two of the four males. One of these two is an adult and the other a first-year bird judged by the criteria for age established by Selander (*Condor*, 56:58-62, 1954) for this genus. Also in adults the white wing spot equals or exceeds the maximum in *C. a. acutipennis* and the white tail spot of the adult males does likewise. These white areas are so difficult to measure consistently and are individually so variable that statistical treatment and validity of an evident trend cannot be offered. The aggregate effect of the several, non-correlated features of paleness is such as to set off the Magdalena group rather distinctly. No one individual in the sample is without expression of one or more of these attributes which distinguish it from other populations of the species that lie nearest geographically.

The race of the upper Magdalena basin may be known as
***Chordeiles acutipennis crissalis* new subspecies**



Type.—Adult male, no. 120493 Mus. Vert. Zool., taken 5 kilometers north of Villavieja, 1400 feet, Huila, Colombia, on February 27, 1949, by A. H. Miller; weight 40.1 gm.; testis 5 mm. long; original no. 7334.

Diagnosis.—Similar in dark dorsal coloration to *Chordeiles acutipennis acutipennis* of Venezuela, the Guianas, and northern and eastern Colombia, but differs in reduced barring of crissum and under tail coverts, the bars either obsolete or the area immaculate; dark bars of underparts to varying degree narrower; ground color of underparts average paler buff. Size as in *C. a. acutipennis*.

Range.—Tropical Zone of the upper Magdalena Valley in the Department of Huila, Colombia.

Specimens examined.—*C. a. crissalis*, 6: vicinity of Villavieja, Huila, Colombia (3 ad. ♂♂, 1 1st-yr. ♂; 1 ad ♀, 1 1st-yr. ♀). *C. a. acutipennis*, 20: Surinam (1 ♂); Venezuela (5 ♂♂, 5 ♀♀); northern Colombia, Dept. Magdalena and Dept. Norte de Santander (4 ♂♂, 4 ♀♀); southeastern Colombia, Putumayo (1 ♀). *C. a. aequatorialis*, 5: coastal Ecuador (3 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀). *C. a. exilis*, 4: Perú.

Compared with *C. a. aequatorialis*, *crissalis* is much darker dorsally, especially in the extent of the dusky markings. In ventral coloration there is overlap between these races, although no example of *aequatorialis* closely approaches in palor the two extreme males of *crissalis*. *Aequatorialis* shows a less extreme tendency than *crissalis* to reduce the barring of the crissum. The race *exilis* is even paler dorsally than *aequatorialis*, but it does not show reduction of the crissal barring.

Chapman (Am. Mus. Novitat. No. 67: 2, 1923) has pointed out that *aequatorialis* is intermediate between *exilis* and *C. a. acutipennis*. Broadly speaking this is true but it is consistently and well set off from both and is not merely a segment of a cline. It is better characterized as an annectant form rather than an intergrade. *Crissalis* is in a sense annectant also but its combination of dark and light features of coloration suggests it is a modification independent of *aequatorialis*, a separate offshoot of *C. a. acutipennis* in which some elements of pigment reduction ventrally have gone farther than in its southern desert relatives. There is no connection of suitable habitat known or likely to be found between the Magdalena basin and coastal Ecuador, as the great Andean mountain mass with its subtropical and temperate forest belts intervenes in southern Colombia and central Ecuador.

In the Magdalena basin, nighthawks were common in the badlands north of Villavieja near our camp in 1949. They also had been found earlier at gravel patches in pastureland near town. The semiarid scrub environment here contrasts strongly with the humid tropical area in the Putumayo district where I recently took a specimen of *C. a. acutipennis* in an opening near the river. The four males taken near Villavieja were obtained in January and February and had active testes, 5 or 6 mm. in length; one female on February 9 was not laying but the other on February 5 had an enlarged yellow ovum, 4 mm. in diameter.

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